SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS:

Please amend the specification as follows:

--**[0006]** Guards for telescopically coupled shafts and universal joints are well known, see e.g. U.S. Pat. Nos. ~~3,31,865~~ 3,031,865; 3,113,441 and 4,605,332. Prior art guards are usually provided in two halves. One half of the guard can be axially fixed or journaled upon a rotating member of the drive line and the other half can be stationary, being fixed to either the prime mover or to the implement. Or, both of the guard sections can be freely rotatable upon their respective shaft sections. In either case, the guard covers the rotating shafts and has smooth external surfaces that do not readily grab fingers, clothing, etc. If the guard rotates, there is usually such low friction between the guard and the shafts that the guard will come to rest if contacted without impeding the rotation of the shafts.--

--**[0018]** Figures 1 and 2 illustrate a telescoping drive line 10 for connecting a prime mover to an attachment, such as a tractor to a mobile implement. The drive line 10 includes a guard 12 made in accordance with the invention. End 14 could be connected to the power output shaft of the tractor and the other end 16 could be connected to the power input shaft of the implement. Ends 14 and 16 include universal joints 18 and 20. The universal joints 18 and 20 are of standard construction, and since the guard of the present invention could be applied to different drive line configurations, the universal joints and their operation will not be described in detail herein. An externally splined shaft ~~(not shown)~~ 24 is fixed to a yoke 26 of universal joint 18 and is received within an internally splined hub shaft ~~(not shown)~~ 28 to provide a telescoping connection between the shaft and the hub shaft. The hub has a grease fitting 30 and is fixed to a tube 32 which is fixed to a yoke 34 of universal joint 20.--

--**[0022]** The bell housings mount a telescoping sleeve assembly therebetween including an inner guard sleeve 70, a center guard sleeve 72 and an outer guard sleeve 74. The inner guard sleeve 70 is fixed to the bell housing 36 at one end and its other

end is overlapped by the center guard sleeve 72, which in turn is overlapped by the outer guard sleeve 74 having its end fixed to the other bell housing 50. The guard sleeves are preferably concentric with the shaft axis. Preferably, the guard sleeves are made of plastic and the inner 70 and outer 74 guard sleeves are ultrasonically or friction welded to the associated bell housing. Like the bell housings and boots, the telescoping sleeve assembly, by virtue of its connection to the bell housings and the presence of the bushings 44 and 58, can be stationary or rotate relative to the drive line 10 if obstructed, however, normally it would rotate with the drive line 10.

[0023] End pieces 80 and 82, of suitable shape such as annular, are fixed to respective ends of the inner 70 and center 72 guard sleeves, respectively. The end pieces 80 and 82 are shown as separate components, but could be a unitary part of the associated sleeves, perhaps by bending in one or more cut sections thereof. These end pieces 80 and 82 provide a surface for a spring 90 to act against, and thereby bias the center guard sleeve 72 in the axial direction toward the outer guard sleeve 74. The spring 90 ~~thus applies~~ is disposed axially between the end pieces and acts against the inner guard sleeve 70 to apply a force on the center guard sleeve 72 that tends to maintain an overlapping relationship between the center guard sleeve 72 and the other guard sleeve during the range of travel along the axis 22 realized during operation so as to bridge any gap between the ends of the inner 70 and outer 74 guard sleeves. As shown in FIG. 1, the three guard sleeves are nearly fully overlapped when the shaft is fully seated within the shaft hub. In this position, the spring 90 is fully compressed so that the maximum spring force can be exerted to drive the center guard sleeve 72 in the axial direction of the outer guard sleeve 74 as the inner 70 and outer 74 guard sleeves move apart, such as shown in FIG. 2, in response to separation of the shaft and shaft hub during operation of the drive line 10. Preferably, the spring 90 is sized and selected to provide an axial force suitable for maintaining a generally even length of overlap between the center guard sleeve 72 and each of the other guard sleeves.

[0024] The guard sleeves of the telescoping sleeve assembly are preferably designed to be rotationally linked together, such as by slideably linking the center guard sleeve 72 to one of the inner 70 or outer 74 guard sleeves. Preferably, a tab 100 is

pierced from (and thus integral to) the center guard sleeve 72 and bent radially inward to fit into an axial slot 102 in the inner guard sleeve 70. The tab 100 has a widened head 104 that is wider than the small width dimension of the slot 102 such that the head 104 can pass through the slot 102 only when sidewise. This avoids inadvertent disconnection of the tab 100 from the slot 102, yet permits the inner guard sleeve 70 to be unlinked from the center guard sleeve 72 by manual manipulation of the tab 100. The center guard sleeve 72 is not linked to the outer guard sleeve 74 so that the two halves of the driveline may be taken apart more readily, although a similar tab and slot retention system could be used if it is desired. Note also that there could be multiple tab and slot connections spaced apart circumferentially along the mating sleeves.--